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HABITAT - the arrangement of food, water, cover, and space **-IS THE KEY!** This newsletter is a place to share ideas, information, and help answer some of your habitat and wildlife gardening concerns.

We want to hear from you! Letters, e-mail, photos, drawings. Let us know how successful you are as you create wildlife habitat on your property. Complete the online [Habichat Reader's Survey](#).

Write to Me! Marilyn Mause, Wild Acres Program, DNR, Wildlife & Heritage Service, Gwynnbrook WMA, 3740 Gwynnbrook Ave, Owings Mills MD 21117, 410-356-0941
E-Mail: customerservice@dnr.state.md.us

Native Plant Profile.....Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)



Flowers: Cream –white blossoms appear with leaves March to June.

Fruits: Dark purple edible, thin-skinned drupes appear from June to October. Bears heavy fruit crop approximately every three years.



Landscape Notes: Highly ornamental blooms, Suitable for border plantings and woodlands. Bark of the tree peels off in square-shaped flakes. Black cherry can occur in a variety of habitats, from moist bottomlands, hillsides, and dry situations. It can grow on the average 50-60 feet in height and can reach a maximum of 100 feet. This is a plant that should not be located where fallen fruits and twigs will be a nuisance, i.e. next to a sidewalk. Wilted leaves may seriously poison cattle.

Black Cherry fruit provides food for: Eastern Bluebird, Cardinal, Catbird, Crows, Common flicker, Blue Jays, Mockingbird, Pileated, Red-bellied and Redheaded woodpeckers, Eastern Kingbird, Great Crested Flycatcher, Brown Thrasher, American Robin, Wood Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Veery, Cedar Waxwing, Red-eyed and Warbling vireo, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Orchard and Baltimore Oriole, Scarlet and Summer tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, American Goldfinch, Eastern Chipmunk Deer Mouse, Meadow Mouse

Black Cherry fruit and buds provide food for: Ruffed Grouse, Ring Necked Pheasant, Bobwhite Quail, and Wild Turkey

Black Cherry twigs and foliage provides food for: White –tailed Deer

Black Cherry fruit, bark and wood provides food for: Black bear, Beaver, Red and Gray Fox, Opossum, Eastern Cottontail, Raccoon, Striped Skunk, Fox, Gray

and Red Squirrels

Black Cherry is the larval host for: Spring Azure, Red-spotted Purple, Viceroy and Tiger Swallowtail butterflies.

Black Cherry provides nesting places for: Eastern Kingbird, American Robin, Orchard Oriole and Baltimore Oriole

Additional Notes: Black cherry is among one of our most important wildlife food plants. Songbirds will fly back and forth, often in large flocks to gorge on the wild fruits, perching nearby regurgitating the pits, which will often become the first trees of abandoned fields.

Maryland Wildlife: Coyote (*Canis latrans*)

The coyote has been found in Maryland since 1972. This mammal is found in every county of the state.

Length: Snout to tail tip is about 3 ½ ft, with about one-third being tail. Coyote carry their tail pointed down when moving.

Height: 2 ½ feet. About the size of small gray collie dog or small German shepherd dog with drooping tail. Coyote do not have a tail that curves up like domestic dog.

Weight: 30 to 35 pounds in Maryland. Males usually weigh more than females. Eastern coyote is on the average about 10 pounds heavier than western coyote.



Track Size:

- Front paws 2 3/8" to 3 ½" by 1 5/8" wide
- Hind paws 2 ½" to 3" long by 1 5/8" to 2 1/8" wide
- Tracks are oval.

Ears: The ears are conspicuously large and erect.

Breeding: Breeds in January. Three to 10 young born 60 to 63 days later. Pups born blind, fur covered. Female nurses them for two weeks. Young leave the den at three weeks: by six weeks will venture out of the den. Will hunt with the parents in the summer. Will stay with the family through most of the fall. Young will then breed their first winter. Dens are used only for raising young. Coyote normally take over old fox dens, instead of digging their own. It is believed that coyote pair for life.



Listen To a Coyote Howl!



Howl!

120k

Food: Coyote are predator / scavengers. They are an important control on the populations of rodents. Diets of east coast coyote are rabbits, rodents, carrion, insects and fruits, such as watermelons, grapes and various summer berries. Coyote are known to raid trash cans and backyard poultry flocks. Even cats and small dogs are eaten. The eastern coyote is so fond of cats that the first sign that coyotes are in an area is the disappearance of felines - **Another Good Reason for Pet Owners to Keep Their Cats Indoors** - Coyote will also dig into compost piles in search of insects.

Impact on other wildlife: Red foxes typically disappear as their larger canine relatives move in an area and out compete them for food and dens. Deer are also preyed upon but coyote appear to have little impact on their populations.

Additional field notes: It is thought that coyote moved to the east after wolves were removed from the area and agriculture opened up woodlands creating more open country which coyote adapted to. As coyote traveled to the east, coyote changed as well, mating with other members of the canine family: dogs, gray wolves, and red wolves. The resulting mix of genetic material has produced a coyote that is highly adaptable to all sorts of conditions. Eastern coyote will form packs but not as much as wolves. A coyote's home range is between two and 26 square miles, depending on its gender and availability of prey. The coyote's territory is smaller, an area that the animal marks with scent posts, scat and chases out other animals, including coyote that are not part of its pack.

NOTE: Individuals that are experiencing problems with coyote are encouraged to call the USDA Wildlife Services in Maryland at 1-877-463-6497.

For additional information, visit: [The Coyote in Maryland](#)

Native Pollinators



Just about everyone has seen honeybees, and most of us assume that they are native to North America. This is actually not the case. Honeybees arrived in America with the early European settlers. In recent years the honeybee population has been decimated by a combination of weather conditions and parasitic mites. The agribusiness crop pollination has suffered because of a shortage of honeybees. If you want to ensure the pollination of your backyard habitat, a good choice would be to encourage native bees.

Native bees are an ideal choice for a backyard since the majority of them fly no further than 100 to 200 yards from their nests. Native pollinators are solitary; there is no need to set up hives or meet zoning restrictions connected with owning honeybee hives. All you need are flowering plants, trees and a plan on the proper use of insecticides, since bees are very sensitive to their use.

You want a variety of bees that will pollinate plantings from early spring through fall in order to provide seeds and fruit for wildlife year round.

Mason Bees are docile, shiny blue bees about two-thirds the size of a honeybee. These bees are some of the earliest to emerge from the winter dormancy. They are an excellent choice to pollinate early flowering fruit trees. Males come out of dormancy first so that they are available to mate with the females who emerge later. From March until June, the females collect pollen and nectar and lay eggs in drilled holes of nesting blocks. (Nesting blocks can be made of untreated wood in which 5/16" holes are drilled of various depths) If you so choose, in late October you may store the bee house in a refrigerator OR other cool place. This will prevent the bees from coming out of dormancy early and starving if there is a warm spell in the winter.



Bumblebees are another bee that does not mind cool weather. They emerge from underground in early spring. They are efficient pollinators of clovers as well as a wide variety of flowers, especially dark flowered species. They are known to use old birdhouses, which are located in the semi-shade. Queen bees will lay their eggs to start the colony. Each colony will divide itself in castes each having a different job to help raise the young. At the end of the summers, new queens are produced. They mate and over winter in the ground to start the cycle again.

Preparing a patch of sandy soil in an undisturbed sunny area of the garden will attract native ground nesting bees, such as the Digger, Sweat and Polyester Bees. Digger Bees make burrows and cells underground and often hide the entrance to their nests beneath leaf litter or in grass to avoid predators, Sweat Bees are attracted to perspiration. They nest underground often with many nests in one area. Polyester Bees don't wear the fabric, but dig nests and cavities for brood cells in the ground and line the cell cavities with abdominal secretions that form a transparent, waterproof polyester membrane. They are excellent summer berry pollinators, such as blueberries.

Mid-summer pollinators are Leaf-cutter Bee and the Carpenter Bee. Leaf-cutter Bees nest in pre-existing holes and carry their pollen load under their abdomens like the Mason Bee. They line a drilled hole or hollow stem with a leaf that has been rolled, and use bits of leaves and petals to prepare the brood cells. The entrance to their nest is sealed with a leaf lid to protect the larvae. They can also nest underground. Carpenter Bees prefer to drill their own nest sites in soft dry wood and their characteristic round holes are often found in wood. These bees unlike the Mason and Leaf-Cutter Bees are very territorial. One of their favorite sources of nectar is Catalpa trees.

For additional information on other native pollinators please check our wild acres web site www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/wildacres.asp. Many thanks to Sharon Dick who originally wrote articles on bees for the Wild Acres Program in the 1990's.



Dealing with County Nuisance Ordinances



You are starting to get your wild acres looking as you designed. Your meadow for wildlife is showing active wildlife use. Then you get a letter from your county government telling you to remove it: cut it down. The area you have established for wildlife seems to be in violation of a weed control law, more commonly known as the nuisance ordinance.

What should you do? Read the letter carefully. A good violation letter will tell you (1) how you have violated the ordinance, (2) if you have an opportunity for an administrative hearing, and (3) will give you a date by which you must be in compliance as well as the penalty for failing to do so. In most cases, the penalties are invoked only as a last resort in resolving a problem.

Think about your wild acre and how it fits into your landscape. Does it look like an area that has been neglected? Are tall plants growing next to someone's manicured flowerbeds? Or blocking the view of a stream? Have your neighbors complained about seeing rats running out of "your weeds" or the weeds are aggravating their allergies?

If you have answered yes to any of the above questions consider mowing the edges of a wildlife meadow so that it has soft curves instead of straight lines. Plant some trees or shrubs along the edges to help define your wild acres as something "planned". Keep the edges set back from the property line at least 6 feet as a courtesy to your neighbors. Be sure to eliminate noxious weeds such as Johnson grass, Shatter Cane and Canada thistle. Cut back anything that blocks a view that you know someone else enjoys or needs.

Call or visit the government official who signed the letter. Ask what prompted them to send it to you. Did someone complain or was the inspector making rounds and simply discovered your wildlife area. ? If someone complained, ask the nature of the complaint. **DO NOT ASK WHO COMPLAINED.** You want to convince the official that you are interested only in keeping your meadow, not retaliating against a disgruntled neighbor.

Explain to the official that you manage your land for wildlife. Take copies of literature you have collected for creating habitat. Describe your long-term plans for your property. Ask if there is a waiver provision in the ordinance, which can be applied to your situation. If no waivers apply, ask your official for an administrative hearing.

At an administrative hearing, a hearing officer, the county official and yourself will discuss your violation. You need to explain that it is not your intention to violate the ordinance, but that your wild acres are part of your landscape plan. Ask for either a waiver from the ordinance or that the government consider your area as not meeting the definition of a nuisance. Be prepared to explain the concept of landscaping for wildlife habitat. Make a drawing of your property that shows your landscape design.

Advise the officials how wildlife species will benefit or are benefiting by the presence of a meadow. Show what steps you have taken to make the area neat and attractive for the enjoyment of anyone who can see it. Show the steps you have taken to control noxious weeds. If neighbors have complained, describe what efforts you have made to resolve those complaints. Reply to their concerns in a courteous and professional manner.

After the hearing is over, the hearing officer will review the transcripts and render a decision on your case. If they decide against you,

you may pursue a negative decision by writing your elected county officials.

Consider sending a letter to the editor of your local paper. Share your thoughts on why wildlife areas should be excluded from your local nuisance ordinance. Suggest that if others share this opinion, to please make it known to your local officials. You may be the starting point for amending your local nuisance ordinance for the benefit of wildlife.

Tips on Making Wild Acres Without Upsetting the Neighbors

1. If possible talk to your neighbors about what you are going to do.
2. Check your local ordinances, or homeowner's bylaws to see if you wildlife plan is going to be a violation. If it is, work on changing these regulations.
3. Try starting small and gradually expand your wildlife habitat. This will be less of a shock to others.
4. Put out benches, paths etc. to make the area look less wild.
5. Mow or mulch a border around your wild acres.
6. Choose native plants that have ornamental value such as colorful fruits, flowers or leaves.
7. Offer tours of your property to neighbors, explaining the benefits your wildlife habitat.

Note: Thanks to Wanda Cole and National Wildlife Federation for their experiences and their articles on this subject which this author gratefully acknowledges.

If you enjoyed this issue of Habichat, you might want to check out
our online back issues and clickable listing of Habichat articles.

<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/wildacres.asp#habichat>

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- Photo of garden bumblebee (*Bombus hortorum*) in flight courtesy of Dan Tunstall Pedoe, Space For Nature – Wildlife Gardening Forum @ <http://www.wildlife-gardening.org.uk/>
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Here is a listing of phone numbers, web sites and organizations that you might find helpful or interesting in your search for ideas to manage your wild acres. **DNR Online**... Inspired by nature! www.dnr.maryland.gov

Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the highest numbers of each species they see at their feeders from November through early April. FeederWatch helps scientists track broad-scale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance. Project FeederWatch is operated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in partnership with the National Audubon Society, Bird Studies Canada, and Canadian Nature Federation. <http://birds.cornell.edu/pfw>

National Wildlife Federation - Details on their backyard habitat program www.nwf.org or call them at 1-800-822-9919.

Native plants - **The Maryland Native Plant Society** offers information dedicated to protecting, conserving and restoring Maryland's native plants and habitats, visit them at www.mdflora.org.

Maryland Cooperative Extension offers home and garden information, tips publications, plant problems, Bay issues, and other links at www.agnr.umd.edu/MCE/index.cfm Their **Home and Garden Information** number is statewide and can be reached at 1-800-342-2507, and from outside Maryland at 1-410-531-1757.

Bioimages, a project of Vanderbilt University, provides educational information to the public on biologically related topics, as well as a source of biological images for personal and non-commercial use. <http://bioimages.cas.vanderbilt.edu/>

Maryland's "**Becoming an Outdoors - Woman Program**" - One of the topics covered in the three-day workshops is Backyard Wildlife. For more information on this program contact Karina Blizzard at 410-260-8559 or send e-mail to: kblizzard@dnr.state.md.us.

For a free wildlife & native plant newsletter, visit the **WindStar Wildlife Institute** at www.windstar.org and subscribe to the WindStar Wildlife Garden Weekly e-newsletter. You can also visit this website to learn how you can become a certified wildlife habitat naturalist.

For more information on butterflies - visit the **North American Butterfly Association** at www.naba.org

Warm season grasses and wild meadows for upland nesting birds visit **Pheasants Forever** at www.pheasantsforever.org or e-mail: pf@pheasantsforever.org

In an effort to continue to provide quality backyard habitat information we are asking our readers to tell us what you think. Please take a few minutes to answer our survey. This will help us to improve our site so we can continue to deliver the information you want.

[Habitat Reader's Survey](#)

Wild Acres

Habitat for Wildlife

Wildlife & Heritage Home

Contact Us

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